

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 424 923

PS 027 016

AUTHOR Park, Jennifer M.
TITLE The State of Our Nation's Youth, 1998-1999.
INSTITUTION Horatio Alger Association of Distinguished Americans, Inc.,
Alexandria, VA.
PUB DATE 1998-00-00
NOTE 48p.; For 1997-1988 report, see ED 413 046.
AVAILABLE FROM Horatio Alger Association of Distinguished Americans, Inc.,
99 Canal Center Plaza, Alexandria, VA 22314; Tel:
703-684-9444; Fax: 703-548-3822; e-mail: HoratioAA@aol.com;
Web site: <http://www.horatioalger.com>
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adolescents; Aspiration; Attitude Change; Career Choice;
Discipline; Extracurricular Activities; Family Life; Family
Relationship; Family Size; High Schools; *Interests;
Marriage; National Surveys; Parent Child Relationship;
School Attitudes; Sex Differences; Social Attitudes;
*Student Attitudes; Student Motivation; *Well Being; Work
Attitudes; Youth Problems
IDENTIFIERS *Adolescent Attitudes; Leisure Activities

ABSTRACT

This report details findings of a national questionnaire survey of the attitudes and plans of American adolescents. Participating were 1,195 students between 14 and 18 years of age in a nationally representative sample. To permit regional comparisons, 250 questionnaires were sent to representative households from each of the 9 U.S. Census regions, with households selected on the basis of household income, household size, market size, and age and gender of the individual teen. A weighting procedure was used to ensure correct representation of Census regions within the national sample. Findings are presented in six major areas. "The Road Ahead" focuses on the greatest problem or challenge during the next year. "Their Role Models" identifies the categories of teens' role models. "The World Around Them" deals with the views of youth on the greatest problems facing the United States. "The School Environment" presents teens' overall marks for schools, safety and security in school, school discipline problems, cheating behavior, teachers' and administrators' caring and concern, student effort and grades, degree of effort and challenge, course work, opportunities and expectations, co-curricular activities, employment, and social life. "Family Life" covers males' and females' relationships with family members, family rules, and attitudes of students identified as Successful, Strivers, or Disillusioned. "Their Future" describes student attitudes toward personal, educational, and occupational plans following high school, career choices, ideas about the American Dream, income expectations, and views on marriage, and children. (Author/KB)

* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *

THE

STATE OF OUR NATION'S YOUTH



ED 424 923

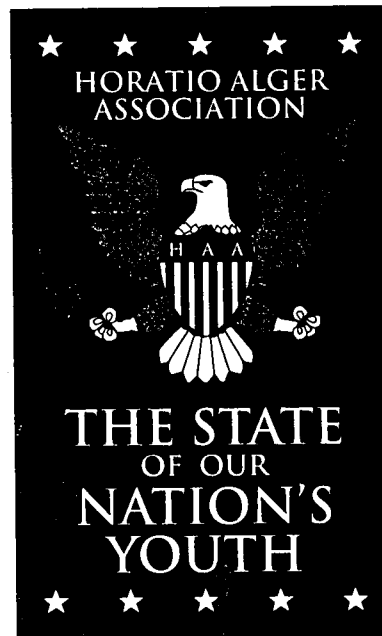
1998-1999

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as
received from the person or organization
originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to
improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this
document do not necessarily represent
official OERI position or policy.



PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND
DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS
BEEN GRANTED BY

Terrence J.
Giroux

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

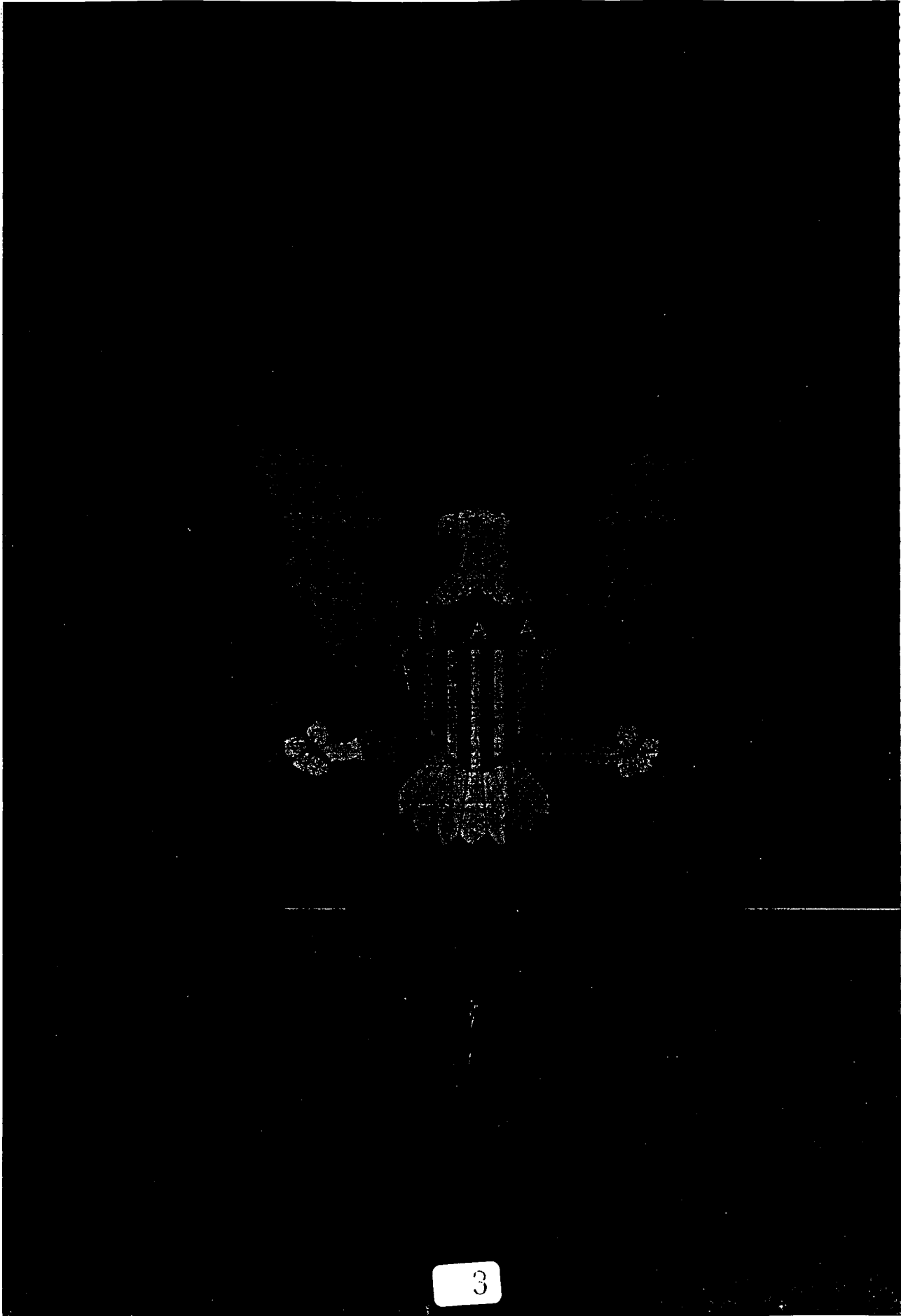
1

PS 027016

HORATIO ALGER ASSOCIATION

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

2

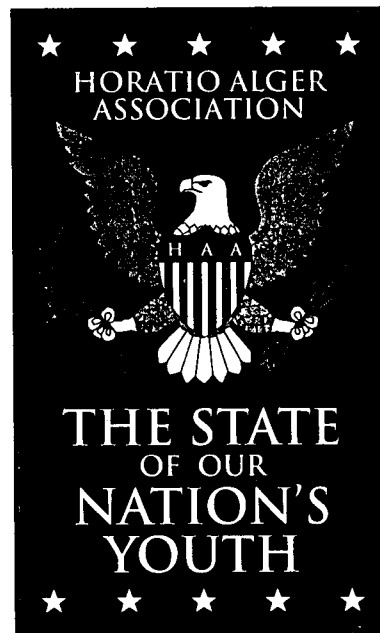


BEST COPY AVAILABLE

THE

STATE OF OUR NATION'S YOUTH

1998-1999



Copyright © Horatio Alger Association of Distinguished Americans, Inc., 1998.
All rights reserved.

HORATIO
ALGER
ASSOCIATION

Horatio Alger Association of Distinguished Americans, Inc.

99 Canal Center Plaza

Alexandria, Virginia 22314

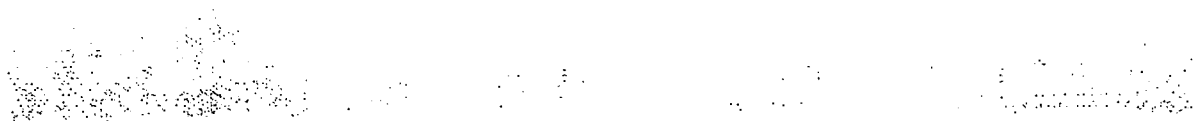
Phone (703) 684-9444 FAX: (703) 548-3822

E-MAIL: HoratioAA@aol.com

Visit us on the Internet: <http://www.horatioalger.com>

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	v
Introduction	1
Foreword	2
The Survey	4
At a Glance	6
Background	8
The Road Ahead	10
Their Role Models	12
The World Around Them	13
The School Environment	14
Family Life	24
Their Future	32
About the Horatio Alger Association	38



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

THE STATE OF OUR NATION'S YOUTH IS AN ANNUAL EFFORT TO GIVE voice to what's on the minds and in the hearts of the country's young people. In undertaking this important project, the Horatio Alger Association of Distinguished Americans is honored to have partners who share our dedication to bringing the hopes, dreams, opinions, and concerns of our children to the attention of the nation.

First and foremost, the Association is grateful to its Board of Directors and all of its Members for their strong, continuing commitment to this effort. We extend a special note of appreciation to Mr. and Mrs. George L. Argyros, Mr. and Mrs. Terry M. Giles, Mr. and Mrs. H. Wayne Huizenga, Mr. and Mrs. Richard L. Knowlton, Mr. and Mrs. James R. Moffett, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Neubauer, Mr. and Mrs. Walter Scott, and Mr. and Mrs. Dennis R. Washington.

Additionally, special thanks are offered to Association Members Wally Amos, Maya Angelou, John O. Hershey, Art Linkletter, Colin L. Powell, John Silber, Arthur E. Turner, and Venita VanCaspel Harris for their guidance in the development of these reports. Our organization also expresses appreciation to Sandra Welch, Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), and the National Educational Telecommunications Association (NETA) for their work in bringing the Horatio Alger Association's message of determination and inspiration to the American public. The Association would also like to express its gratitude to educational analyst Jennifer M. Park, author of this report.

INTRODUCTION

FOR A HALF CENTURY, THE HORATIO ALGER ASSOCIATION OF Distinguished Americans has been listening to the nation's young people – listening to their hopes and fears and trying to replace their worries with dreams and aspirations.

Founded in 1947, the Horatio Alger Association was created to demonstrate that the American dream is a truly attainable goal for all citizens who, through hard work, honesty, and determination, can overcome any obstacles. The Association reaffirms this critically important goal each year by identifying outstanding role models whose lives are characterized by great success, triumph over adversity, and an abiding commitment to help others. As it honors these American traditions of both the past and present, the Association, through an ever-expanding array of educational efforts, gives hope, inspiration, and assistance to the young people of this nation.

One such initiative, made possible through the continuing generosity of its members, is the Association's National Scholars Program. Each year, this program awards more than \$1 million in college scholarships to promising high school seniors who, like the Association's Members, have confronted and vanquished some of life's most forbidding roadblocks.

This report, *The State of Our Nation's Youth*, represents another of our organization's efforts to hear what is in the hearts and minds of young people. In publishing this annual back-to-school survey, we hope to give voice to our teenagers' thoughts and opinions. Our youth have much to say, and if we are to be the compassionate and thoughtful guardians of their best interests, we must understand and appreciate their concerns, motivations, expectations, and opinions.



George L. Argyros
Chairman
Horatio Alger Association



Richard L. Knowlton
President and CEO
Horatio Alger Association

FOREWORD

THIS 1998 *STATE OF OUR NATION'S YOUTH* REPORT PROVIDES AN important barometer for assessing how well this society is raising its next generation of parents, workers, and leaders. It stands apart from the litany of other national studies, which focus more narrowly on counting health-compromising behaviors among adolescents (e.g., alcohol use, tobacco use, violence, and teen pregnancy). Instead, this report continues the Horatio Alger Association's tradition of assessing some of the strengths, capacities, and skills needed to thrive in a complex and changing global community. By so doing, this body of work provides both encouraging news and insight about what all sectors and citizens can do to enable and nurture the next generation.

I find several results particularly encouraging. Youth in 1998 continue to be deeply bonded to and affirming of the two major social institutions charged with promoting positive human development: family and school. In contrast to popular cultural mythology about these two social institutions, the vast majority of high school students report that their families are sources of support, nurture, and discipline. And most view schools affirmatively, with two-thirds rating their schools' overall performance as A or B.

If there is anything we know about how societies nurture healthy youth, we know that deep, sustained relationships with caring and principled adults are key. About nine out of ten youth report that schools provide at least one adult "who personally cares about my success." And about nine out of ten have at least one adult in their families "who really cares about me." These indicators of intergenerational connection are among the most important findings in this report. A challenge to all communities is to extend this web of intergenerational relationship to include many other adults so that all youth are surrounded by an extensive array of neighbors, coaches, youth leaders, mentors, and volunteers who extend and elaborate the nurturing presence of parents and teachers.

The 1998 *State of Our Nation's Youth* report also assesses other indicators of successful development for which the data are not as affirming. We learn, for example, that high school students, on the average, engage in only 52 minutes of homework a day. Because homework has a dual purpose -- to both enhance learning and provide structure and routine -- we ought to see this form of time use become more normative. Indeed, we also find in this report that there was a substantial drop in homework between 1997 and 1998.

A sense of safety is developmentally crucial. Safety enables connection, belonging, and engagement. Yet only 44 percent of youth in this study report that they "always" feel safe in school. Fair and enforced rules restricting tobacco and alcohol use are an essential factor in promoting adolescent health. Surprisingly, youth report that family rules in these domains are less common in 1998 than they were in 1997. And this is in spite of rising efforts to mobilize families and communities to confront these public health issues.

Some would argue that American society has been organized more for the benefit of males than females. Nevertheless, this report provides evidence that on some indicators of healthy development, males lag behind females. We see, for example, that, in comparison to females, males:

- ★ Engage in fewer hours of homework per week
- ★ Are less likely to participate in cocurricular clubs, teams, and organizations
- ★ Report less motivation for achievement in school settings

Extending this gender theme, we note that both males and females report some disconnect from their fathers. Among males, for example, 70 percent say they can confide in their mothers as compared to 51 percent for their fathers. Among females, the difference is more pronounced. Sixty-nine percent say mothers are potential confidantes, in stark contrast to 29 percent for fathers.

We can use this report in several ways. It can serve both as a benchmark for measuring the health and vitality of American youth and as a call to action. Most important, I hope that its dissemination will help the American public to refocus on the potential and possibility of adolescence. This report serves as an important antidote to the mistrust and suspicion of youth, which dominates public discourse and private thinking. Such negative thinking creates a barrier to citizens building deep and sustained relationships with the youth in their midst. Though family and school -- which are accented in this report -- are essential actors in raising healthy youth, the formula for becoming a more successful society includes activating the nurturing, supporting, affirming, relational energy of all citizens.



Dr. Peter L. Benson

Dr. Benson is a Social Psychologist, Author, *All Kids are Our Kids*, and President, Search Institute, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

THE SURVEY

THE STATE OF OUR NATION'S YOUTH IS A STUDY OF THE ATTITUDES and plans of American teenagers as they head into the 1998-1999 school year. In this survey, students between the ages of 14 and 18 have the opportunity to voice their opinions on the family, school, and social issues affecting their lives today. This study was conducted via self-administered mail questionnaires. The questionnaire consisted of a four-page legal-sized booklet mailed from NFO Research, Inc., on May 6, 1998, to 2,250 individuals between 14 and 18 years old. Returned surveys were accepted until June 9, 1998. There was a 53 percent total return rate (1,195).

When drafting the survey for the 1998 project, every effort was made to ensure consistency of wording for questions intended for comparison purposes against the 1997 project. However, it should be noted that significant wording/content changes were made in the 1998 document to address new issues or capture different perspectives on a repeat topic. Comparisons to the 1997 study have been made only for comparable question areas.

The sample for the 1998 study was selected from the NFO Panel and balanced to 1997 Current Population Survey (CPS) estimates to be nationally representative of households with a male or female head 18 years of age or older and the presence of an individual 14-18 years of age. To permit regional comparisons, 250 questionnaires were mailed to representative households within each of the nine U.S. Census regions. The households were selected on the basis of household income, household size, and market size, as well as age and gender of the individual teen. Additional balancing criteria included race and household designation (presence of other members in a household). One teen in the household, identified by age and gender on the survey document, was selected to complete the survey.

Because the primary focus of this survey was to obtain national level data, data weighting was conducted prior to running the data tabulations in order to ensure correct representation of Census regions within the national sample. An NFO proprietary weighting procedure was used for this purpose. This procedure is a multivariate weighting technique used to balance a sample on marginal distribution values.

Finally, also at the tabulation stage, 103 respondents were eliminated from the base of the report because they either were home schooled (31)

or did not currently attend school (72). Teens who did not return the questionnaire by the cutoff date as instructed were not included in the sample.

Throughout this report, differences between the two groups shown in a table that were statistically significant at either the .05 level or .10 level have been noted. The .05 level differences are indicative of a greater difference between the two groups than those differences significant at only the .10 level.

REGION	FINAL SAMPLE IN PERCENT	1997 CPS IN PERCENT
New England	4.7	4.7
Mid Atlantic	14.5	14.5
E North Central	16.2	16.2
W North Central	7.7	7.7
South Atlantic	17.1	17.1
E South Central	6.4	6.4
W South Central	12.5	12.5
Mountain	6.6	6.6
Pacific	14.2	14.2
HOUSEHOLD INCOME		
<\$15,000	12.9	12.9
\$15,000-\$29,999	18.1	18.1
\$30,000-\$49,999	23.7	23.7
\$50,000-74,999	23.8	23.8
\$75,000 and above	21.5	21.5
HOUSEHOLD SIZE		
2 members	7.9	7.9
3 members	24.1	24.1
4 members	34.8	34.8
5+ members	33.0	33.0
RACE		
Caucasian	80.1	80.1
African American	15.5	15.5
Asian/Pacific Isl.	3.3	3.3
American Indian/Eskimo	1.1	1.1
HOUSEHOLD DESIGNATION		
Husband/Wife	67.9	67.9
Male/Relative	6.1	6.1
Female/Relative	24.3	24.3
Male/Non-Relative	1.3	1.3
Female/Non-Relative	0.3	0.3
AGE		
14 years	20.2	20.2
15 years	20.0	20.0
16 years	20.3	20.3
17 years	20.3	20.4
18 years	19.1	19.1

1011

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The table below summarizes the major survey findings.

AT A GLANCE

	TOTAL 1,041	MALES 520	FEMALES 521
STUDENT ENVIRONMENT			
Always feel safe in their school	43.9%	42.9%	44.9%
Believe teachers and administrators have taken all necessary steps to make them feel safe and secure	43.2%	40.7%	45.7%
Feel that the behavior of other students in their school interferes with their performance	40.4%	40.2%	40.7%
SCHOOLS			
Give their schools an "A" or a "B"	66.1%	64.3%	67.9%
Agree that courses school offers are preparing them for the future	68.9%	65.1%	72.8%
Agree that courses their school offers are challenging	60.3%	58.7%	61.9%
Believe that it is important to most of their teachers that they do their best	67.5%	63.3%	71.7%
Have at least one teacher or administrator to talk with about personal problems	65.5%	58.9%	72.2%
COURSES IMPORTANT FOR FUTURE SUCCESS			
Mathematics	91.5%	90.9%	92.0%
Computer courses	91.2%	90.5%	92.0%
English	89.6%	83.7%	95.5%
Science	78.7%	76.0%	81.4%
Foreign languages	57.2%	46.3%	68.2%
ATTITUDES			
Try to take the most difficult and challenging courses they can	52.0%	44.5%	59.5%
Believe the amount of work they do now is very important to later success in life	66.3%	59.4%	73.2%
Personally important to them that they do their best in all of their classes	72.7%	64.5%	81.0%
OPPORTUNITIES			
Believe the harder they work the more opportunities will be available to them	73.8%	70.4%	77.3%
Believe they will have many opportunities available to them after they graduate	70.8%	67.2%	74.5%
Believe there is the same amount of opportunity for students of all races and social classes	57.6%	53.8%	61.4%
EFFORT AND GRADES			
Received mostly A's on last report card	25.0%	17.6%	32.3%
Homework is a priority; complete before other activities	39.0%	30.9%	49.0%
Mean number of hours of homework per week	6.1	5.4	6.8

12

AT A GLANCE (continued)	TOTAL	MALES	FEMALES
ROLE MODELS	1,041	520	521
Role model is family member	40.7%	41.1%	40.2%
FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS			
Mother is a person they can confide in about personal problems	69.3%	69.7%	68.9%
Father is a person they can confide in about personal problems	40.8%	51.0%	29.4%
OUTSIDE ACTIVITIES			
Have a group of friends they hang out with	64.2%	63.3%	65.1%
Had a job in past school year	38.3%	39.4%	37.3%
Participated in athletic teams or clubs	51.4%	56.2%	46.7%
Participated in service/volunteer groups	23.4%	18.5%	28.2%
TOP CAREER CHOICES			
Teacher	7.5%	3.4%	11.7%
Computer hardware/software developer	7.4%	12.5%	2.1%
Medical doctor	6.8%	3.3%	10.3%
Business person	6.4%	7.4%	5.4%
Engineer	6.0%	11.2%	0.9%
THE FUTURE			
Percentage planning to continue their education	81.8%	78.2%	85.4%
Percentage planning to attend a four-year college or university	61.1%	54.6%	67.5%
Top reason for seeking further education after high school is to get a good job	37.9%	45.3%	30.8%
Top reason for seeking further education is to have the ability to make a difference/change things for the better	19.4%	15.8%	22.8%
Ideal age for marriage	25.5	26.0	24.9
Number of children desired (includes those who do not want children)	2.0	1.9	2.1*

Note: **Bold red** figures indicate significant differences at the .05 level

*Significantly different at the .10 level

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

BACKGROUND

BORN INTO THE RICHEST COUNTRY IN THE WORLD AND COMING OF age in a time of peace and high relative prosperity combined with low social unrest, the youth of 1998 are optimistic about their chances of success after graduation. Generally positive about their classes and teachers, most of the youth of 1998 expect to combine work and career with personal development and satisfaction. More important, the currently successful members of the high school classes of 1998, 1999, 2000, and 2001 include female and male students and represent all races and socioeconomic backgrounds. Although this study broadly classifies today's high school students in order to better understand their diversity, no single demographic characteristic guarantees or predetermines success or failure.

These students of the Millennial Generation will enter into a workplace rich in opportunities made possible by the low numbers of their immediate predecessors - the Generation X'ers. Perhaps because they perceive ample opportunities and are confident that their material needs will be met, many of today's teens want to change society for the better. Not only concerned with monetary gain, many expressed a version of the American Dream that includes universal harmony and peace and the ability to change the world for the better. At the same time, the fact that today's youth view crime as the major challenge to our nation today indicates that they want to further guarantee the security they grew up with.

The youth of 1998 both respect and like their parents. In fact, two out of five have family members as role models. And most teens get along with their parents, sharing family experiences and talking over day-to-day issues with them. Moreover, the expectations of today's youth include moving beyond their individual families to make an impact on society.

Although this report describes teens collectively, it is important to remember that averages and generalities do not necessarily apply to all teens. In order to better understand the range of attitudes and behaviors in today's high school students, an additional analysis was conducted to search for pockets of students who differed in terms of their grades, the amount of effort expended, the activities they participated in, and their attitudes toward coursework. This analysis was conducted using a state-of-the-art data mining product by NFO Research, Inc. This computer search enabled the Horatio Alger Association to pinpoint unique groups of students who, at this "snapshot in time," differed in many significant ways from the averages described.

One of the outcomes of this computer search was the finding that the most optimistic and successful students were composed of a much higher proportion of females (63%) than males (37%). This successful group of students displayed significantly different attitudes and behavior from other students, resulting in better grades and more active participation in student life. (These highly successful students, along with students from other unique groups, will be described in a later section of the report.)

As a result of this finding of a highly successful group of predominantly female students, the complete set of back-to-school data was examined by gender in order to determine the ways in which female and male teens differed. The results were quite surprising and revealed, in general, that female teens shared many of the characteristics of the highly successful group of students. In general, females worked harder at their coursework (averaging nearly ten more hours of homework per week) and received better grades than males. Female students were more likely to agree that specific courses were important for their future success, notably agreeing in greater proportions that English, science, and foreign language courses were important to their success. Furthermore, females challenged themselves more frequently to take the most difficult courses available and were more likely to agree that the amount of work they do now is important to their success later in life. Female teens were also more likely to state that it is important to them that they do their best in all of their classes.

These young females, although about as likely as young males to give their school a grade of A or B, were more likely to agree that their schools prepared them for their future and to agree that it is important to their teachers that students do their best. Female students were also more likely than male students to have at least one teacher or administrator they could talk to about their personal problems.

Most surprisingly, female teens expected to attend a four-year college or university in significantly greater numbers than males. They also intended a career as a medical doctor significantly more often than males (11.7% vs. 3.4%), but were less likely than males to seek a career as a computer hardware or software developer (2.1% vs. 12.5% for males). And females were less likely than males to state that their chief motivation for obtaining further education is to get a good job and more likely to state that they are motivated by the ability to make a difference and change things for the better.

Consistent with their hard work and better grades, female teens now have income expectations no different from those of males.

THE ROAD AHEAD

AS THEY HEAD BACK TO HIGH SCHOOL, ON TO THEIR FIRST YEAR OF college, or to life in the workplace, today's students expressed diverse concerns, many revolving around their academic accomplishments and future roles in society. In this year's survey, students were asked to state "their biggest problem or challenge, if any, during the next year." Students could write anything they wanted, rather than checking one of several boxes. In order to help us understand the common challenges they face, their responses were classified into their areas of major concern: academics, personal accomplishments and goals, and career choice.

Improving their grades or maintaining their grade point average (GPA) was the greatest single concern expressed by today's teens. One-quarter of all students named grades as their primary challenge, with 7 percent of students concerned only with graduating. Males and females expressed similar concerns with academic goals, although females were significantly more concerned with personal accomplishments and goals, and males focused somewhat more on career goals. College selection and acceptance into the college of their choice were also important, especially to females.

In the personal realm, students voiced concerns about their relationships with family and peers, managing their time, and adjusting to college. In this arena, females were more than twice as likely to be concerned as males with getting along with their peers and family and also were twice as concerned with time management. Financial concerns were more problematic for females than males. Self-improvement and sports were each important to about 5 percent of students, with females notably as concerned as males with sports participation. Of the students who listed career concerns, 7 percent were concerned with finding or working at a job, an area significantly more important to males than females. And while some students were focused on their desired college or winning the big game, 2.3 percent of students and nearly 3 percent of females listed simply "getting to school" as their biggest concern.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

16

GREATEST PROBLEM OR CHALLENGE DURING THE NEXT YEAR

	TOTAL	MALES	FEMALES
ACADEMICS	42.7%	42.0%	43.5%
Achieving and maintaining good grades or a good GPA, keeping up in class	25.2%	23.6%	26.7%
Graduating/completing school year	6.8%	7.9%	5.7%
Selecting a college	4.7%	4.4%	5.1%
Acceptance into college or college of choice	3.3%	1.9%	4.7%
Choosing a curriculum	1.8%	1.0%	2.6%*
PERSONAL GOALS	40.0%	35.4%	
Getting along with peers or family	8.4%	5.1%	11.6%
Time management	6.3%	4.3%	8.2%
Adjusting to college	5.9%	5.4%	6.5%
Financial arrangements	5.9%	3.7%	8.0%
Other comments on self-improvement	5.3%	6.1%	4.5%
Excel/participate in sports/athletic activities	4.7%	4.9%	4.5%
Transportation/mobility	3.3%	3.6%	2.9%
Getting to school	2.3%	1.9%	2.7%
More freedom/independence	1.7%	1.4%	2.0%
CAREER	10.2%		7.7%
Finding/working at a job	6.6%	8.3%	4.9%
Selecting a career or career goal	3.6%	4.2%	2.9%

Note: **Bold red** figures indicate significant differences at the .05 level

*Significantly different at the .10 level

Responses below 1.0 are not included on the table

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

17

THEIR ROLE MODELS

WHEN TEENS WERE ASKED WHICH CATEGORY THEIR ROLE MODEL would be from, more than half replied family or friends. Teachers and sports figures each received about 10 percent of their votes, with girls more likely to name friends, family friends, or teachers, and boys more likely to name a sports figure. Interestingly, political leaders were not considered role models by teens, receiving less than 1 percent of the total votes.

IF YOU COULD PICK ONE PERSON TO BE YOUR ROLE MODEL, WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING CATEGORIES WOULD YOUR ROLE MODEL BE IN?

	TOTAL	MALES	FEMALES
Family member	40.7%	41.1%	40.2%
Friends/family friend	14.4%	12.2%	16.5%*
Teaching/education	11.1%	7.4%	14.9%
Sports/sports-related	10.3%	16.5%	4.0%
Entertainment industry	4.9%	3.8%	6.0%
Religious leader	4.3%	3.9%	4.8%
Business leader	1.9%	2.5%	1.3%
National political leader	0.5%	0.6%	0.3%
International political leader	0.4%	0.4%	0.5%
Local political leader	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other	11.6%	11.6%	11.5%

Note: **Bold red** figures indicate significant differences at the .05 level

*Significantly different at the .10 level

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

18

THE WORLD AROUND THEM

IN 1998 TEENS WERE ASKED TO NAME THE GREATEST PROBLEM FACING the United States today. (However, some teens wrote down more than one problem, and all responses were included in the totals.) The number one problem named by teens in 1998 was crime and violence (listed by 30% of total students) followed by the decline of family, moral, and social values (23%), drugs (17%), and AIDS (15%). Although the format of this question changed from 1997 to 1998, the top four problems listed -- crime and violence, the decline of values, drugs, and AIDS -- were the same as those listed by 1997 teens, indicating that teens' assessment of U.S. problems has remained relatively stable over the 1997-1998 timeframe.

GREATEST NATIONAL PROBLEMS

Rank In 1998	The Top Ten	
1	Crime/violence	30.2%
2	Decline of family, moral, and social values	22.8%
3	Drugs	16.7%
4	AIDS	15.4%
5	Environmental pollution/deterioration	6.7%
6	Racial tension/discrimination	6.4%
7	Poverty/unemployment	5.2%
8	Health care	3.3%
9	Chemical and biological warfare	3.0%
10	The U.S. budget	2.8%

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

ALTHOUGH THEY ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THEIR FUTURE AND THE world around them, the world of each of today's teens is highly influenced by their immediate environment, including their schools and families. When asked to grade their school, today's teens assigned relatively high marks but were less likely to rate their schools A or B than they were in 1997. In 1997, 73 percent of students rated their schools highly, compared with 66 percent in 1998. Most (nearly one-half) in 1998 gave their schools a B, while only 7.6 percent of public schools received a grade of D or F. As in previous years, private schools fared much better than public, with more than four out of five students grading their private school B or better. In fact, over one-third of private school students gave their school a grade of A.

As schools vary, so do students. Every teacher who has received student evaluations knows that better students assess their teachers more highly; poorer students tend to assign their teachers lesser marks. The same principle holds with school evaluations. Students who maintain an A or B average tend to regard their schools more highly than those receiving lower grades. These higher-achieving students generally view their schools (and their lives as well) through a rosier lens. Student evaluations of their schools are also differentiated by gender and family type. Girls gave their schools significantly more A ratings (perhaps because they themselves receive higher grades), and students from extended or nuclear families were more likely to grade their schools A or B than students raised by single parents.

HOW STUDENTS GRADE THEIR SCHOOLS' OVERALL PERFORMANCE

	TOTAL	PUBLIC	PRIVATE
TOTAL A OR B	66.1%	63.6%	83.0%
A	19.3%	16.7%	34.1%
B	46.8%	46.9%	48.9%
C	27.0%	28.8%	13.3%
D	5.2%	6.0%	0.9%
F	1.7%	1.6%	2.8%

Note: **Bold red** figures indicate significant differences at the .05 level

It is difficult to determine what specific attributes of their schools students take into consideration when assigning an overall rating, although students consider teachers and coursework, as well as their cocurricular activities. The results from this survey indicate that there also may be some serious concerns relating to the school environment. For example, schools, particularly public schools, are no longer a safe haven for all students. Only about 44 percent of students indicated that they always feel safe in their school. This figure is markedly higher for private schools: 68 percent of private schools students always feel safe vs. only 40 percent of public school students. Students feel that teachers and administrators could do more to ensure their safety; only four out of ten feel that their teachers and administrators have taken all necessary steps to help them feel safe and secure.

AMOUNT OF SAFETY/SECURITY IN SCHOOL

	TOTAL	PUBLIC	PRIVATE
Always feel safe in my school	43.9%	40.0%	67.9%
Teachers and administrators have taken all necessary steps for my safety and security	43.2%	39.6%	64.3%
Teachers and administrators have taken some steps toward my safety and security	48.1%	50.7%	33.5%

Note: **Bold red** figures indicate significant differences at the .05 level

DISCIPLINE

The conduct of other students is a problem for some teens, particularly in the public schools. Although about half feel the rules on student conduct in their school are about right, nearly one out of five (17.6%) feel that rules are too lax. When asked about the behavior of other students in their school, 43 percent of public school students indicated that the behavior of other students in their school definitely or somewhat interferes with their performance. In contrast, only 22 percent of students in private schools agreed that the behavior of other students has a negative impact on their performance. However, nearly half of the African-American students agreed that their performance was impeded by other students.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

CHEATING

For the first time this year, students were queried about their perceptions of the cheating behavior of other students in their school. Students replied with a resounding "yes" that they perceive that cheating behavior exists in schools, and that cheating is not confined to a few students. Although about half stated that no students or only a few students cheat, about one-third agreed that about half of the students cheat at least some of the time, and over ten percent agreed that most students cheat frequently. Private school students were much more likely to agree that few or no students cheat. Males also believed that there was less cheating behavior: 61.4 percent agreed that no or few students cheat. Because this behavior is self-reported, it is difficult to tell if the reporters of cheating are actually the cheaters or just the observers. Nevertheless, we can conclude that cheating exists and that it may be fairly widespread.

CHEATING BEHAVIOR IN SCHOOLS

	TOTAL	MALES	FEMALES	CAUCASIANS	AFRICAN AMERICANS	OTHER RACES	PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS	PRIVATE SCHOOL STUDENTS
Believe no or few students cheat	54.4%	61.4%	47.4%	50.4%	71.1%	62.4%	52.0%	67.4%
Believe half or most students cheat	45.6%	38.6%	52.6%	49.6%	28.9%	37.6%	48.0%	32.6%

Note: **Bold red** figures indicate significant differences at the .05 level. (Males different from females, African Americans different from Caucasians, public school students different from private school students.)

TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS' CARING AND CONCERN

Despite concerns about school safety, and the behavior of other students in the schools, it is reassuring to see that most students can talk over their problems with their teachers and administrators. About nine out of ten students indicate that there is at least one teacher or administrator who personally cares about their success, and nearly two-thirds can talk to a teacher or administrator at school about their personal problems as well. Again, private schools fare significantly better on most measures. Females are more likely to have established close relationships with teachers than males, and those with the poorest grades, who presumably need a confidante the most, are the least likely to have formed relationships that allow them to discuss personal or school problems. Perhaps this is an area in which teachers – who are already doing so much – could do even more. As we will see in a later section, it is the students who have no family member or adult to talk to who appear to be at greatest risk.

CONCERN AND AVAILABILITY OF TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS

	TOTAL	PUBLIC	PRIVATE
There is at least one teacher or administrator who personally cares about my success	89.1%	88.5%	94.3%*
There is at least one teacher or administrator I can talk with about my school program	83.5%	82.2%	93.7%
There is at least one teacher or administrator who is always available when needed	77.8%	76.2%	88.4%
It is important to most of my teachers that I do my best	67.5%	64.9%	84.9%
There is at least one teacher or administrator I can talk with about my personal problems	65.5%	63.9%	77.6%

Note: **Bold red** figures indicate significant differences at the .05 level

*Significantly different at the .10 level

EFFORT AND GRADES

Some students, but certainly not an overwhelming majority, are making an effort to learn as much as they can in high school, with females generally surpassing males. On measures of effort, females who seek challenging courses and place priority on homework scored significantly higher than males. In fact, half of females agreed that they complete homework before doing other activities, compared with only 30 percent of males, reflecting the previous observation that females express a greater concern with time management than males. Challenge-seeking and striving behavior are shown below.

DEGREE OF EFFORT AND CHALLENGE

	TOTAL	MALES	FEMALES
I try to take the most difficult and challenging courses I can	52.0%	44.5%	59.5%
The amount of work I do in school now is important to my success later in life	66.3%	59.4%	73.2%
It is important to me that I do my best in all my classes	72.7%	64.5%	81.0%
Doing homework is a priority for me. I complete it before participating in other activities	39.9%	30.9%	49.0%

Note: **Bold red** figures indicate significant differences at the .05 level

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

23

Students' behavior mirrors the low overall priority they give to doing their homework. This year's students say they study even less than last year's -- an average of only 6.1 hours per week (including weekends), a substantial drop from last year's 6.6 hours per week. Females continue to study more than males, averaging slightly less than one and a half hours more per week (6.8 hours for females vs. 5.4 hours for males), and correspondingly receive higher marks (32% of females vs. 18% of males received mostly A's on their last report card). Caucasians study less than members of other races. Notably, those of races other than Caucasian or African American study an average of 8.3 hours per week, and students in private schools study even more -- 10.2 hours per week compared with just 5.5 hours for those in public schools.

Although students are studying less, most students feel that the amount of work they do is in line with the amount required by their teachers and parents. More than half agree that the amount of work required by teachers is about right, and six out of ten believe that their parents require the right amount of work. However, another large group (38%) believe that teachers require too much work, while about three in ten think that their parents demand too much.

AMOUNT OF WORK REQUIRED BY TEACHERS AND PARENTS

	ALMOST/ NOT ENOUGH	ABOUT RIGHT	SOMEWHAT TOO MUCH/ TOO MUCH
Amount of work required by teachers	8.9%	53.2%	37.8%
Amount of work required by parents	12.8%	59.0%	28.2%

Despite the relatively low amount of effort that many students put into their homework, today's students generally receive high marks. In fact one-quarter of all students received mostly A's on their last report card, 17.3 percent received all A's and B's, and 14.2 percent received B's and C's. Students in public and private schools received similar grade distributions.

However, it should be noted that grades were self-reported and, therefore, subject to inflation and overstatement. Based on student reports, grades are not necessarily related to the amount of effort put forth. Of those students receiving A's and B's in school, 44 percent report studying four hours or less a week. Private school students, who study about twice as many hours on average, received nearly the same grades, suggesting that students in private schools may have to exert more effort for

the same reward. Given the proliferation of A and B grades, it is not surprising that 72.3 percent of students agree that the grading system in their school is "about right," with only about one in five regarding it as somewhat or much too difficult.

CHALLENGING COURSES, HOMEWORK, AND GRADES: SELF-REPORTED

	PERCENT TAKING MOST DIFFICULT AND CHALLENGING COURSES	MEAN NUMBER OF HOMEWORK HOURS PER WEEK	PERCENT RECEIVING MOSTLY A'S ON LAST REPORT CARD
TOTAL	52.0%	6.09	25.0%
Male	44.5%	5.42	17.6%
Female	59.5%	6.75	32.3%
Caucasian	53.2%	5.76	28.7%
African American	42.2%	6.87	9.6%
Other	62.6%	8.30	19.4%
Public school student	52.1%	5.49	25.1%
Private school student	55.3%	10.16	27.2%

OPPORTUNITIES AND EXPECTATIONS

Do some students study harder because they expect more opportunities from life, or do better study habits lead to higher expectations? Both may be true. In any case, there does seem to be a relationship between effort and sense of opportunity, although it does not apply uniformly in all situations. Females, who study more than males, expect greater opportunities after they graduate. African Americans study somewhat more than Caucasians, but expect about the same opportunities; however, students of races other than Caucasian or African American study much more, but expect only somewhat more opportunities.

African Americans were much less likely than Caucasians to state that there is the same level of opportunity for students of all races and social classes. However, when asked about the opportunities they perceive for themselves personally, 63 percent of African Americans compared with 72 percent of Caucasians, perceive that they will have many opportunities after they graduate. Although this difference is significant at the .10 level, it is less significant than the difference in responses regarding the level of opportunity for students of all races and social classes. This finding indicates that there is a distinction between the perceived level of personal opportunity and the sense of equal opportunity for all among African Americans. Additionally, there were no statistical differences between Caucasians and African Americans on responses to the statement that the harder they work, the more opportunities will be available

after they graduate. This is an interesting finding, particularly when viewed in light of the fact that today's students, for the most part, do not feel that racism and discrimination are the major problem facing the nation today. The increased sense of personal opportunity expressed by African Americans in this survey gives hope that today's youth will live in a society with both perceived and real opportunities for all.

SENSE OF PERSONAL OPPORTUNITY

	TOTAL	MALES	FEMALES	CAUCASIANS	AFRICAN AMERICANS	OTHER RACES
The harder I work, the more opportunities will be available to me	73.8%	70.4%	77.3%	74.6%	66.7%	80.2%*
I will have many opportunities available to me after I graduate	70.8%	67.2%	74.5%	72.3%	62.9%**	73.8%

SENSE OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

	TOTAL	MALES	FEMALES	CAUCASIANS	AFRICAN AMERICANS	OTHER RACES
I feel that there is the same amount of opportunity for students of all races and social classes	57.6%	53.8%	61.4%	62.8%	35.3%***	48.5%

Note: **Bold red** figures indicate significant differences at the .05 level

*Other races significantly different from African Americans at the .10 level

**African Americans significantly different from Caucasians at the .10 level

***African Americans significantly different from Caucasians at the .05 level

COURSES

Students continue to wish that their courses were more challenging, interesting, and exciting. About six out of ten find their courses challenging, but of course many admitted that they didn't enroll in the most difficult or challenging courses they could take. Private school students find their courses are better preparation for the future than do public school students, and they also find their coursework more challenging and somewhat more interesting, perhaps because they expend more effort studying. Nevertheless, only 39.4 percent of private school students agree that their courses are exciting. Female students agree more strongly that the courses they take are preparing them for the future and that they have ample opportunity for open discussion in all of their classes.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

26

QUALITY OF COURSE

	TOTAL	MALES	FEMALES
Courses are definitely preparing me for the future	68.9%	65.1%	72.8%
Courses are very challenging	60.3%	58.7%	61.9%
Courses are very interesting	50.9%	51.1%	50.7%
Courses are very exciting	36.0%	33.1%	39.0%
Have opportunity for open discussion in my classes	67.8%	64.4%	71.3%

Note: **Bold red** figures indicate significant differences at the .05 level

*Significantly different at the .10 level

Although the overall ranking for vocational subjects dropped this year, today's students, especially males, are vocationally oriented in a broader sense, oriented toward the practical rather than the liberal arts. Courses that can directly help today's students secure jobs rank uppermost in their minds; courses with little or no utilitarian value are less highly rated. Mathematics, long touted as a "critical filter" for entrance into the professions, was rated as important by 91.5 percent of students and was rated equally important by males and females. English remained the third-ranked subject in importance to future success, ranked as more important by females than males. Pragmatic concerns such as sex education/health and family living/home economics garnered more votes than history/social studies, government, and foreign languages.

RATINGS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF COURSES

(% Very, Somewhat Important)

Rank In 1997	Rank In 1998		Total	Males	Females
2	1	Mathematics	91.5%	90.9%	92.0%
1	2	Computer usage/programming	91.2%	90.5%	92.0%
3	3	English	89.6%	83.7%	95.5%
4	4	Science	78.7%	76.0%	81.4%
5	5	Business/commercial	78.3%	78.9%	77.8%
7	6	Sex education/health	66.5%	60.7%	72.2%
9	7	Family living/home economics	64.9%	59.3%	70.5%
8	8	Government	64.6%	62.0%	67.3%
6	9	History/social studies	61.9%	59.0%	64.8%*
11	10	Foreign languages	57.2%	46.3%	68.2%
12	11	Physical education	53.7%	56.2%	51.2%
10	12	Vocational	52.5%	68.1%	38.7%
13	13	Religion	50.8%	51.4%	50.2%
14	14	Music	34.5%	27.1%	41.9%
15	15	Art	34.2%	28.0%	40.3%
16	16	Drama	20.5%	13.8%	27.3%

Note: **Bold red** figures indicate significant differences at the .05 level

*Significantly different at the .10 level

127

Despite their pragmatism, today's students have a soft spot for the arts, drama excluded. When asked their favorite subjects, teens ranked art as highly as mathematics, both listed by 40 percent of students. Computer courses were listed by nearly half of all students, but were more favored by males than females. Government was the most disliked subject, more disliked by females than males. Drama was also disliked by a high proportion of students, particularly by males.

THEIR LIVES OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL

With a homework regimen averaging only 52 minutes a day, today's students have ample time for jobs and social activities. Females, who study the most, are also more likely to participate in at least one cocurricular activity. Males are still more likely to participate in sports-related activities, although females are catching up; nearly half of females participated in sports this year. Females are more likely to participate in each activity with the exception of science clubs and band/orchestra, which are engaged in equally by males and females.

PARTICIPATION IN COCURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

	TOTAL	MALES	FEMALES
Athletic Team/Clubs	51.4%	56.2%	46.7%
Service/volunteer groups	23.4%	18.5%	28.2%
Honor societies	20.8%	14.4%	27.2%
Band/orchestra	16.6%	15.5%	17.7%
Choir/choral groups	15.0%	7.1%	22.8%
Drama/theatre	12.4%	8.2%	16.6%
Language clubs	12.2%	6.6%	17.7%
Career-oriented clubs	12.1%	9.7%	14.4%
School publications	11.2%	5.7%	16.8%
Student council/government	11.2%	8.1%	14.3%
Science clubs	5.4%	6.0%	4.8%
Debate/speech	4.8%	3.2%	6.5%
Cheerleading	4.8%	0.0%	9.7%
Participate in any activity	81.5%	76.3%	86.6%

Note: **Bold red** figures indicate significant differences at the .05 level

Work may be more of a priority for today's teens than homework; more than four out of ten held a job in the past year. While about two-thirds have a group of friends they associate with, some have only one or two friends.

TEENS HOLDING JOBS

	TOTAL	MALES	FEMALES
Had a job past school year	38.3%	39.4%	37.3%
Plan to have job next school year	61.5%	62.7%	60.4%

TEENS' SOCIAL LIFE

	TOTAL	MALES	FEMALES
Have a group of friends I hang out with	64.2%	63.3%	65.1%
Only hang out with one or two close friends	30.9%	30.4%	31.4%
Prefer to spend most of my time alone	4.9%	6.3%*	3.5%

*Significantly different at the .10 level

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

23

FAMILY LIFE

Their families have had an even greater influence than the school environment on teens over the course of their lives. How well do today's teens really get along with their families? To answer this question, relationships of males and females with each family member were analyzed separately.

Males, as a rule, indicated they can talk to their moms about everyday issues, but only seven out of ten can confide in their mothers. However, even fewer (about half) can confide in their fathers, with most unable to confide in brothers, sisters, or grandparents. This suggests that a large proportion of males, when they have problems, may not be able to find a confidante in their own family, particularly if they are not close to their mother. Those in stepfamilies have the hardest time; while more males than females like their stepmothers, only about one-quarter can confide in them. Relationships with stepbrothers and stepsisters are highly strained for both sexes. Overall, less than a third of those who have stepbrothers believe their stepbrothers really care about them and only one in five believe their stepsisters care.

MALE FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

(Based on those living with family member)

	MOTHER	FATHER	BROTHER(S)	SISTER(S)	GRAND-PARENT(S)
Is a person I can talk to about day-to-day issues	87%	67%	45%	41%	49%
Is a person I can confide in about my personal problems	70%	51%	38%	32%	32%
Is a person I get along well with	83%	72%	59%	57%	69%
Is a person who really cares about me	96%	87%	62%	66%	71%
Is a person I share family experiences with	83%	74%	65%	67%	67%
Is a person I like	90%	84%	72%	76%	76%
Is a person I respect	92%	86%	56%	55%	79%

Females are even less likely than males to have a confidante within their family. While about seven in ten can confide in their mothers, only about one in three can confide in their fathers. For most, siblings and grandparents are not an option, either, although females confide in their sisters more often than males. Relationships with stepparents are often strained as well; only about 44 percent of females respect their stepmothers and only 56 percent respect their stepfathers.

FEMALE FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

(Based on those living with family member)

	MOTHER	FATHER	BROTHER(S)	SISTER(S)	GRAND-PARENT(S)
Is a person I can talk to about day-to-day issues	84%	55%	42%	56%	49%
Is a person I can confide in about my personal problems	69%	29%	23%	41%	32%
Is a person I get along well with	76%	65%	59%	60%	68%
Is a person who really cares about me	96%	87%	76%	77%	67%
Is a person I like	88%	79%	78%	79%	80%
Is a person I respect	90%	84%	56%	57%	86%

THEIR FAMILY RULES

On their home turf, teens have a variety of rules and regulations to follow. Like 1997 teens, they basically see the rules they must follow as fair. With the exception of dating, for which significantly more females have rules, rules are applied about equally to males and females. Males and females generally perceive the fairness of family rules about the same, but boys are less likely than girls to view the completion of school work as a fair rule, while girls are less likely than boys to view restricted time on the phone as fair.

Of concern in 1998 is the fact that family rules restricting smoking and alcohol use existed in less than 90 percent of households, given the fact that both smoking and alcohol use negatively impact health and, in the case of alcohol, public safety. Only 79.7 percent of households in 1998 had rules restricting smoking. Similarly, only 84.9 percent of households had rules governing alcohol use.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

31

RULES TEENS LIVE WITH

	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE
Drinking alcohol	84.9%	85.7%	84.1%
Completing of school work	82.4%	83.7%	81.1%
Curfew	80.3%	80.8%	79.9%
Completing of household chores	80.0%	81.9%	78.2%
Smoking	79.7%	80.4%	79.0
Attend religious services	60.3%	61.5%	59.1%
Dating	59.8%	52.3%	67.4%
Time on phone	57.4%	55.4%	59.4%
Clothing styles/hair	55.5%	55.6%	55.3%
Preparation for career	54.4%	57.5%*	51.3%
Selection of friends	46.7%	48.8%	44.5%
Time on hobbies/sports	45.2%	47.7%	42.8%
Taking care of younger siblings	41.5%	41.7%	41.3%

Note: **Bold red** figures indicate significant differences at the .05 level

*Significantly different at the .10 level

UNIQUE STUDENT GROUPS

As previously mentioned, student groups that shared common characteristics were identified on the basis of grades, effort expended, activities, and attitudes toward coursework. In addition to a highly successful group of students, two additional groups of interest were identified. The second group of students, who are called *Strivers*, study more than average yet fail to get the good grades of their more successful counterparts. Although *Strivers* work hard academically, they do not participate in activities, possibly indicating that they may have other family or job commitments, or may live in households that are unable to afford the cost of activities. A third group of students, called the *Disillusioned*, has lost faith in their own efforts and struggle with grades and the other challenges of high school. Less able to form strong relationships than many of their classmates, the *Disillusioned* may be at risk both academically and psychologically.

It is important to remember that these groups, although sharing similarities at one point in time, are reflective of young people who are still in a period of transition and growth. These groups are in no way meant to limit or define their members, only to help us understand the commonalties they share at a single "snapshot" in time.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

AT A GLANCE: UNIQUE STUDENT GROUPS

	TOTAL 1,041	SUCCESSFUL 187 18%	STRIVERS 167 16%	DISILLUSIONED 158 15%
GENDER				
Male	50.0%	37.3%	44.6%	68.0%
Female	50.0%	62.7%	55.4%	32.0%
STUDENT ENVIRONMENT				
Always feel safe in their school	43.9%	44.0%	38.9%	35.6%
Believe teachers and administrators have taken all necessary steps to make them feel safe and secure	43.2%	42.6%	39.8%	32.7%
Feel that the behavior of other students in their school interferes with their performance	40.4%	36.5%	48.7%	53.7%
SCHOOLS				
Give their schools and "A" or a "B"	66.1%	82.0%	62.2%	31.8%
Agree that courses schools offer are challenging	90.3%	72.1%	55.7%	45.4%
Believe that it is important to most of their teachers that they do their best	67.5%	88.0%	69.2%	33.8%
Have at least one teacher or administrator to talk to about personal problems	65.5%	76.8%	57.7%	46.2%
COURSES IMPORTANT FOR FUTURE SUCCESS				
Mathematics	91.5%	97.0%	88.1%	85.6%
Computer courses	91.2%	95.0%	90.6%	86.2%
English	89.6%	93.9%	90.6%	78.4%
Science	78.7%	89.4%	74.4%	66.4%
Foreign languages	57.2%	80.4%	55.6%	36.6%
ATTITUDES				
Try to take the most difficult and challenging courses they can	52.0%	100.0%	51.2%	0.0%
Believe the amount of work they do now is very important to later success in life	66.3%	97.9%	62.7%	25.0%
Personally important to them that they do their best in all of their classes	72.7%	100.0%	83.6%	0.0%
OPPORTUNITIES				
Believe the harder they work the more opportunities will be available to them	73.8%	95.7%	70.2%	46.5%
Believe they will have many opportunities available to them after they graduate	70.8%	91.8%	70.6%	41.5%
Believe there is the same amount of opportunities for students of all races and social classes	57.6%	70.3%	55.6%	35.5%

Note: Analysis of the survey results identified six unique student groups and three of these groups were selected for comparison in this report.

AT A GLANCE (continued)	TOTAL	SUCCESSFUL	STRIVERS	DISILLUSIONED
EFFORT AND GRADES	1,041	187	167	158
Received mostly A's on last report card	25.0%	60.1%	17.6%	0.0%
Homework is a priority; complete before other activities	39.9%	78.7%	40.4%	8.2%
Mean number of hours of homework per week	6.1	9.6	7.5	3.8
ROLE MODELS				
Role model is family member	40.7%	49.9%	43.4%	43.4
FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS				
Mother is a person they confide in about personal problems	69.3%	78.0%	69.7%	68.5%
Father is a person they confide in about personal problems	40.8%	51.7%	41.6%	32.2%
OUTSIDE ACTIVITIES				
Have a group of friends they hang out with	64.2%	71.5%	51.8%	56.7%
Had a job in past school year	38.3%	34.8%	35.1%	39.3%
Participated in athletic teams or clubs	51.4%	64.3%	0.0	34.3%
Participated in service/volunteer groups	23.4%	39.2%	18.0%	14.7%
TOP CAREER CHOICES				
Teacher	7.5%	8.5%	2.9%	3.4%
Computer hardware/software developer	7.4%	5.6%	10.1%	10.9%
Medical doctor	6.8%	13.0%	6.1%	1.3%
Business person	6.4%	8.4%	3.8%	8.1%
Engineer	6.0%	8.6%	5.1%	3.7%
THE FUTURE				
Percentage planning on continuing their education	81.8%	94.6%	78.3%	59.8%
Percentage planning to attend a four-year college or university	61.1%	89.4%	47.5%	19.6%
Top reason for seeking further education after high school is to get a good job	37.9%	28.5%	44.8%	50.7%
Top reason for seeking further education is to have the ability to make a difference/change things for the better	19.4%	25.1%	18.3%	6.0%
Ideal age for marriage	25.5	25.6	25.4	26.4
Number of children desired (includes those who do not want children)	2.0	2.0	1.7	1.7

Note: Differences were not statistically tested

SUCCESSFUL STUDENTS

As previously noted, nearly two-thirds of the most successful teens are female. Daughters of mothers who came of age in the 70s and 80s, these successful females are fulfilling the dream of equal opportunity for women and men. Their willingness to take on hard work and challenges, combined with a deep caring for the environment and a desire to change the world for the better, suggest that this group will continue to erode remaining barriers to success for women in the workplace. Yet these young women do not believe that success is their birthright; members of this *Successful* group, both male and female, take the most difficult and challenging classes they can, and as a group devote the most hours per week to homework. It is important to these students that they do their personal best in all their classes, believing overwhelmingly that the amount of work they do in school now is important to their success later in life. Nearly all members of this segment affirm that the harder they work, the more opportunities they will have in life, with more than nine out of ten believing that there will be many opportunities for them personally after they graduate. For most, the proof that hard work leads to success is in their grades; more than six out of ten students in this group received mostly A's on their last report card.

These more successful students generally believe that hard work, rather than individual circumstances, determines success for others as well. More than any other segment, they are the most likely to believe (seven out of ten) that equal opportunities exist for students of all races and social classes.

Members of this group have developed strong relationships with their parents, teachers, and friends. More than nine out of ten are able to talk to at least one teacher or administrator about their school problems; surprisingly, three out of four can even talk to teachers or administrators about their personal problems. The successful group is more likely than other students to be able to confide in, get along with, and like and respect both their mothers and fathers. These students are also more likely than average to have a group of friends they hang out with.

Most significantly, the majority of this group of students did not start out with above average advantages in life. In fact, 8 percent of this group are from households making less than \$15,000 a year and 14 percent are being raised by a single parent. This is a racially diverse group: 8 percent are African American, 5 percent are Asian or Pacific Islander, and 4 percent are Hispanic.

This group's commonality is their belief in themselves, the presence of others who believe in and support them, and their ability to form relationships both at home and at school. If this group can continue its focused effort and positive attitude in the face of college and workforce challenges, our future may very well be in their hands.

THE STRIVERS

Strivers are a middle-of-the road group of students. These students, while trying hard, have not yet found their niche in terms of student life and activities. Despite their lack of participation in sports, music, or art, and without the high grades of more successful students, they continue to study and generally do the best they can. More female than male and more likely than average (17%) to live in households with a total income under \$15,000, this group nevertheless studies about as much as their more successful counterparts.

Strivers feel less positive about their schools than do many students and feel much less positive than their more successful classmates. Only about three out of five state that the courses they are taking are definitely preparing them for the future. Nevertheless, about half take the most difficult and challenging courses they can, and an overwhelming majority state that it is important that they do their best in all of their classes. Like their more successful counterparts, these students feel that the amount of work required by their teachers is about right (60%) and two-thirds agree that their parents require the right amount of homework. About one in five feels the rules on student conduct in their school are too lax and half feel that the behavior of other students in their school interferes with their school performance.

While this average group does not have relationships with their parents that are as strong as those of their more successful classmates, the parental relationships this group has are on par with other students in their age group. The difference may be that they are less able to find a teacher or administrator to talk to about their personal problems. Additionally, only half have a group of friends to hang out with, and nearly 8 percent prefer to spend most of their time alone, the highest of any segment.

Strivers have not given up on themselves. They very much believe in their own abilities and are working to improve their lives. Their hard work, effort, and determination may very well lead to successful outcomes later in life.

THE DISILLUSIONED

Unfortunately, there is a group of students who have lost faith in their own efforts. This *Disillusioned* group is composed mainly of males; nearly seven out of ten are male. Many of these students feel that the future does not hold opportunities for them. In fact, many started life with some disadvantages: one in five comes from a household with an income of less than \$15,000 a year, and only 57 percent live in a household with their father. More than one in ten are raised by single mothers. Characterized by low grades, members of this group do not take the most difficult and challenging classes they can, possibly because they cannot meet the minimum entrance requirements. Yet only one in four in this group believes that the amount of work they do in school now is important to success later in life; and only one in three agrees that it is important to teachers that they do their best. This group of students is more likely to feel that school has let them down and that the courses are not relevant to their future, challenging, interesting, or exciting.

Disillusioned students generally see fewer opportunities for themselves; only 42 percent agree that there will be many opportunities for them after they graduate. These students see even fewer opportunities for others; 36 percent feel that there is the same amount of opportunity for students of all races and classes.

Most feel overwhelmed by the demands of teachers and parents; nearly 50 percent feel that their teachers require too much homework, and 45 percent feel that their parents demand too much. More than any other segment, they experience their grading system as too difficult, yet only one-third study five or more hours per week.

This group of students is also less likely to have developed good relationships with their fathers; only 45 percent feel they can talk to their fathers about day-to-day issues, and sadly, only about seven in ten respect their fathers. Although these students have better relationships with their mothers than their fathers, measures of their relationships with their mothers are generally below average as well. Many in this group are unable to forge relationships with teachers and administrators, with fewer than half able to talk to at least one teacher or administrator about personal problems. The inability to forge relationships also extends to relationships with their peer group, and more than 6 percent prefer to spend most of their time alone. Tragically, there may be no one they feel they can turn to for help.

THEIR FUTURE

TODAY'S TEENS SEE THEIR FUTURE AS A BALANCE OF WORK AND career, personal accomplishments, and family and friends. Wanting more than material success, most want to make a difference and contribute to society. Basically, today's teens want both the material and the spiritual, close family and friendships. Far from rebelling against the society that has provided them with so much, they want to embrace what life has handed them and become givers as well as receivers.

Today's teens want to continue their education before getting married, the greatest number naming 25 as the ideal age for marriage. Four out of five plan to go on to college or vocational training. Jobs and careers are extremely important to today's practical teens, named number one before even happiness itself as best expressing the American Dream.

IMPORTANT TO PERSONAL SUCCESS

(% Agree/Agree Strongly)

Work and career	98.3%
Personal development and satisfaction	96.9%
Friendships	94.4%
Immediate family	92.1%
Make a contribution to society	76.4%
Extended family	75.1%
Religious/spiritual activities	67.6%

Today's teens are motivated to continue their education. When asked the most important single motivator for continuing their education, males were more likely to agree that "getting a job" was their most important priority, while females were more likely to agree that making a difference or changing things for the better was their main motivation. At the same time, many teens value the options and independence that an education can bring. Compared with 1997 teens, 1998 teens were somewhat less likely to view education as a source of self-enrichment.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

38

GREATEST MOTIVATING FACTOR FOR SEEKING FURTHER EDUCATION

(Based on those planning to attend college or training/vocational school)

	Total 1997	Total 1998	Males	Females
A mechanism to getting a job/ well-paying job	33.7%	37.9%	45.3%	30.8%
To have the ability to make a difference/ change things for the better	22.5%	19.4%	15.8%	22.8%
Independence	14.5%	13.2%	9.9%	16.5%
More options becoming available	13.3%	11.8%	12.7%	11.0%
Self-enrichment	9.2%	6.2%	5.0%	7.2%
A mechanism to getting further education	2.9%	5.6%	5.9%	5.2%
Following the footsteps of someone I admire	2.9%	3.7%	4.1%	3.2%
Family acceptance or pressures	1.3%	1.7%	1.9%	1.5%
Social status or acceptance	1.6%	1.5%	1.6%	1.4%

Note: **Bold red** figures indicate significant differences at the .05 level

THEIR IMMEDIATE PLANS

Today's teens want it all -- a good education, a good job, and perhaps travel are in their futures. More than four out of five teens plan to attend college or a vocational school immediately after high school and many will work, possibly while attending school (31%). A far greater number of females will continue on to a four-year college than males. Female students are also more likely to plan on getting married, but are less likely to attend a training vocational school or join the armed forces. A rather large number of students plan on traveling while more than one out of ten are undecided at the present time.

PLANS AFTER HIGH SCHOOL

	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE
Attend four-year college or university	61.1%	54.6%	67.5%
Attend two-year college	14.4%	13.2%	15.5%
Attend a training or vocation school	11.4%	14.9%	8.0%
Get a job	30.8%	30.6%	31.0%
Get married	6.4%	4.6%	8.2%
Join the armed forces	7.5%	10.9%	4.1%
Join a volunteer organization	3.4%	2.6%	4.2%
Travel	8.6%	7.3%	10.0%
Undecided	11.7%	13.0%	10.4%

Note: **Bold red** figures indicate significant differences at the .05 level

*Significantly different at the .10 level

TOP TEN CAREER CHOICES

Teaching, medicine, business, and engineering remained the top four career choices in 1998. However, this year differences between male and female career choices were extremely marked. Females significantly preferred teaching, medicine (medical doctor, nursing, and allied fields), while males showed a significantly stronger interest in engineering and computer hardware and software development.

In fact, 22.6 percent of females selected the medical field as their career choice, up from 21.3 percent in 1997. Nearly half of the females choosing a medical profession want to become a medical doctor, indicating that females may be switching their career choices from nursing and allied medical fields to medical doctor.

Males, in contrast, showed very high interest in engineering, computer software development, and computer hardware development.

TOP TEN 1998 CAREER CHOICES

	Total 1997	Total 1998	Males 1998	Females 1998
Teaching	9.6%	7.5%	3.4%	11.7%
Medical doctor	5.7%	6.8%	3.3%	10.3%
Business	5.1%	6.4%	7.4%	5.4%
Engineering	3.0%	6.0%	11.2%	0.9%
Law	4.5%	4.4%	2.3%	6.5%
Computer software development	5.7%	4.0%	6.4%	1.5%
Nursing	4.2%	3.4%	0.3%	6.5%
Miscellaneous medical	5.7%	3.4%	1.0%	5.8%
Computer hardware development	2.2%	3.4%	6.1%	0.6%
Veterinarian	2.4%	3.2%	1.3%	5.1%

Note: **Bold red** figures indicate significant differences at the .05 level

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

40

THEIR AMERICAN DREAMS

For today's teens, the American Dream means a good job, happiness and enjoyment, familial connections, monetary gain and a comfortable life, and the well-being of others. Teens want to be successful in their jobs and careers but also want strong social connections and universal welfare.

WHAT IS YOUR IDEA OF THE AMERICAN DREAM?

PERSONAL/FAMILIAL ENRICHMENT	75.7%
Emotional Needs/Desires	42.6%
Happiness/enjoyment	15.2%
Success/achievement	14.0%
Family	13.4%
Freedom/choice	6.7%
Love/attention/affection	5.6%
Children	5.3%
Spouse/significant others	4.2%
Marriage	2.7%
Friend/neighbors/community	2.5%
Healthy, active life/longevity	2.5%
Be my own person	2.5%
POSSESSIONS/CAREER	29.3%
Job/career	21.4%
Home/apartment	11.6%
Education	4.5%
Motor vehicle	4.3%
MONETARY GAIN/COMFORT	25.2%
Have money/comfortable living	16.3%
Being rich	6.4%
UNIVERSAL WELFARE	17.6%
Happiness, peace, and harmony	5.0%
Less/no crime/violence/war	4.5%
People reaching out to each other, improving quality of life	4.3%
Better religious ties	3.1%

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

41

THEIR INCOME

Many of today's teens expect to begin living their American Dream soon after completing their education, with nearly one out of five expecting to earn at least \$50,000 a year as they begin their careers. For the first time, girls expect to make as much as boys, with no real differences in any of the income categories. Very few teens expect to earn under \$15,000 a year. Compared with 1997, female teens are more likely to project that they will start their careers earning at least \$35,000. In 1998, 18.4 percent of female teens projected at least \$50,000 as their initial income compared to 14.4 percent in 1997.

WHAT SALARY DO YOU EXPECT TO EARN PER YEAR WHEN YOU BEGIN YOUR CAREER?

	TOTAL 1997	TOTAL 1998	MALE 1997	MALE 1998	FEMALE 1997	FEMALE 1998
Under \$15,000	7.7%	6.6%	4.0%	6.8%*	11.0%	6.4%
\$15,000-\$24,999	25.7%	22.8%	22.7%	20.7%	28.3%	25.0%
\$25,000-\$34,000	31.6%	29.5%	31.3%	29.7%	31.8%	29.4%
\$35,000-\$49,999	18.0%	21.5%*	22.0%	22.2%	14.5%	20.8%
\$50,000-\$74,999	10.8%	11.4%	12.0%	12.6%	9.8%	10.2%
\$75,000 or more	6.2%	8.1%	8.0%	8.1%	4.6%	8.2%

Note: **Bold red** figures indicate significant differences at the .05 level

*Significantly different at the .10 level

THEIR FUTURE FAMILIES

Age 25 was the most frequently selected ideal age for marriage by today's teens, with males averaging about one year older than females as the mean ideal age for marriage. Although today's teens want families, and to live near their extended families, they definitely do not want to have a large number of children. Of those teens who do want to have children, males desire an average of 2.18, and females want 2.43. When those who do not want children were included in the averages, the number dropped to below 2 for males and only slightly over 2 for females.

MARRIAGE AND CHILDREN

	TOTAL	MALES	FEMALES
Ideal age for marriage	25.47	26.04	24.90
Number of children would like (based on those who do want children)	2.30	2.18	2.43
Number of children would like (including those who do not want children)	1.97	1.88	2.05*

Note: **Bold red** figures indicate significant differences at the .05 level

*Significantly different at the .10 level

Horatio Alger Association

Founded in 1947 to combat a growing attitude among young people that economic opportunity was a thing of the past, the Horatio Alger Association of Distinguished Americans, Inc., is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit educational organization. The Association strives to motivate and educate our nation's young people about the economic and personal opportunities afforded them by the promise of the American free enterprise system.

The Association brings the "Horatio Alger heroes" of today together with those of tomorrow by bestowing the Horatio Alger Award annually, hosting Horatio Alger Youth Seminars, sponsoring the National Scholars Conference, awarding more than \$1,000,000 annually in grants and college scholarships, and providing a placement service.

MEMBERSHIP—Consisting of more than 500 Horatio Alger Award recipients, the membership represents all walks of American life. Members have made outstanding contributions in the fields of science, medicine, business, entertainment, athletics, law and jurisprudence, religion, education, and the arts.

EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES—The Horatio Alger Association focuses on recognizing outstanding Americans while providing a critical communication link to motivate and educate America's youth.

THE HORATIO ALGER AWARD: This honor is presented each year to Americans who serve as role models by excelling professionally in their respective fields and who make significant contributions to improving their communities and their nation.

HORATIO ALGER NATIONAL SCHOLARSHIPS AND SPECIALIZED GRANTS: More than \$1,000,000 in grants and college scholarships are awarded annually to promising secondary school students who have overcome adversity and are recognized for their outstanding community involvement.

HORATIO ALGER YOUTH SEMINARS: Secondary schools in every state and the District of Columbia are invited to apply and are selected annually to host seminars focusing on career opportunities and public or community service.

HORATIO ALGER NATIONAL SCHOLARS CONFERENCE: All recipients of the Horatio Alger National Scholarships attend, as guests of the Association, an educational conference to meet with Association Members and gain an enhanced understanding of the American free enterprise system and a deeper insight into the operation of the federal government.

HORATIO ALGER COLLEGIATE PARTNERS: A premier network of colleges and universities from across the country works in partnership with the Association to provide special scholarship and financial aid opportunities for Horatio Alger National Scholars to attend their schools.

HORATIO ALGER INTERNSHIP AND PLACEMENT SERVICE: An opportunity to gain practical work experience while attending college, with the possibility of permanent placement following graduation, is provided to students selected as Horatio Alger National Scholars.

HORATIO ALGER/LOUIS FEINSTEIN ENRICHING AMERICA PROGRAM: This program recognizes two high school students in each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia for their community service and humanitarian efforts and awards each of them with a \$2,000 U.S. Savings Bond.

HORATIO ALGER SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE: Each year, a secondary school is recognized for outstanding achievement in working with students facing adversity, and a \$5,000 educational grant is awarded to that school's district to further its work with youth.

STATE OF OUR NATION'S YOUTH: An annual survey of America's students questions young people ages 14–18 about the people, institutions, and issues that are shaping their lives.

PUBLIC AWARENESS—The Association strives to increase public awareness of its educational services and carries the Horatio Alger message to millions of American families.

TELEVISION BROADCAST OF ONLY IN AMERICA: THE ANNUAL HORATIO ALGER AWARDS. Since 1993, the Annual Horatio Alger Awards has reached millions of American households through national broadcasts on PBS (1996 – 1998), CBS (1995), and NBC (1994 and 1993).

TELEVISION SERIES AGAINST THE ODDS: A series of 30-minute programs broadcast on PBS that feature the inspiring real-life stories of the Association's Members.

PARTNERSHIP WITH PBS TEACHER RESOURCE SERVICES:

Through PBS's extensive educational network, the annual Horatio Alger Awards broadcast is available to over 16,000 school districts across the nation with a curriculum guide for use in the classroom.

HORATIO ALGER WEBSITE: The home-page features biographical information about Association Members and Horatio Alger National Scholars as well as descriptions of the educational programs and activities of the Horatio Alger Association. (<http://www.horatioalger.com>)

PUBLICATIONS

ONLY IN AMERICA OPPORTUNITY STILL KNOCKS, announces the Horatio Alger Award recipients and National Scholarship recipients annually.

QUOTATIONS: SUCCESS SECRETS OF POWER THINKERS, is a collection of inspirational quotations and biographical information from the Members of the Horatio Alger Association.

THE FORUM, the Association's semiannual newsletter, provides current information about Members, Association activities, and educational issues.

STRIVE AND SUCCEED, the Association's student newsletter, provides current information about the National Scholars, Association activities, and educational programs.

CHARTING THE COURSE: THE NEXT 50 YEARS details the Association's recent accomplishments and presents plans for future achievements.

THE NATIONAL SCHOLARS SURVEY highlights the accomplishments of the Horatio Alger National Scholars from 1984 to the present.

46

ONLY IN AMERICA: A LEGACY OF ACHIEVEMENT AND AN INVESTMENT IN AMERICA'S FUTURE provide options for supporting the educational programs and activities of the Association and contributing to the organization's endowment fund.

THE STATE OF OUR NATION'S YOUTH REPORT conveys the results of a national survey on the attitudes and beliefs of teenagers, and **PORTRAIT OF CONTRASTS** compares the results of this survey with the survey responses of Horatio Alger National Scholars.

The Horatio Alger Association is wholly funded by private sector support.

The Association's federal tax identification number is 13-1669975.

Horatio Alger Association of Distinguished Americans, Inc.
99 Canal Center Plaza
Alexandria, Virginia 22314
Tel: (703) 684-9444
Fax: (703) 548-3822
E-mail: HoratioAA@aol.com
Visit us on the Internet: <http://www.horatioalger.com>



HORATIO
ALGER
ASSOCIATION

Copyright © Horatio Alger Association of Distinguished Americans, Inc., 1998.
All rights reserved.

Horatio Alger Association of Distinguished Americans, Inc.

99 Canal Center Plaza
Alexandria, Virginia 22314
Phone (703) 684-9444 FAX: (703) 548-3822
<http://www.horatioalger.com>

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

48



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)



NOTICE

REPRODUCTION BASIS



This document is covered by a signed "Reproduction Release (Blanket)" form (on file within the ERIC system), encompassing all or classes of documents from its source organization and, therefore, does not require a "Specific Document" Release form.



This document is Federally-funded, or carries its own permission to reproduce, or is otherwise in the public domain and, therefore, may be reproduced by ERIC without a signed Reproduction Release form (either "Specific Document" or "Blanket").